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DRAFT REPORT

Addendum

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PROGRAMME QUESTIONS

Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Programme 24. Administrative services

1. At its 31st meeting, on 24 June 1996, the Committee considered programme 24, Administrative services, of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.

Discussion

2. Several delegations stressed the importance of the programme because of its impact on the financial resources of the Organization. Accordingly, they believed that the programme narrative should have been more detailed. Other delegations expressed the view that it should not have concentrated on the status quo but rather should have brought into focus the objective of the programme for the next century. They indicated that the narrative should have addressed ways and means of making the Organization more efficient and effective. The view was also expressed that the programme narrative was concise and contained the basic guidelines necessary for the programme. An absence of clear and tightly drawn objectives was noted, as was the absence of benchmarks against which the programme could be judged.

3. Some delegations believed that references to the "financial crises" of the Organization should be deleted since it could not be determined that that would

continue during the plan period. Several delegations stressed the importance of the full, timely and unconditional payment by Member States. They believed that an appeal to that effect should be included in the recommendations of the Committee to the General Assembly. Most delegations agreed that the promotion of intergovernmental agreement on measures to overcome the long-standing financial problems of the United Nations, particularly as related to the issue of the scale of assessments, was the prerogative of Member States and not of the Secretariat. Delegations, therefore, believed that such references should be deleted from the programme. Some queried why cash flow items appeared as activities of both subprogramme 24.1, Management services and 24.2, Programme planning, budget and accounts. The Secretariat explained that information on contributions was provided under 24.1 and expenditure data under 24.2.

4. A number of delegations believed that the backbone of any organization was qualified and competent staff and that paramount importance should be given to that issue in subprogramme 24.3, Human resources management. Most delegations regretted the absence in the objectives of the subprogramme of references to staff management relations, ratio of gender, geographical distribution, career development, the national competitive examinations and the advancement of women. Several delegations expressed concern about the deteriorating conditions of service of staff and its consequent effect on morale. The same delegations believed that conditions of service should be viewed more broadly, taking into account career development prospects, stability and the varying degrees of security of tenure. Other delegations stressed the necessity to correct the imbalance between the permanent and fixed-term appointments and promote more broadly the practice of secondment of qualified personnel by States to the United Nations Secretariat.

5. Under subprogramme 24.4, Support services, most delegations noted the absence of any planned upgrading of United Nations facilities under buildings and commercial services. The same delegations stressed the need to include improvement of United Nations facilities as one of the objectives of the subprogramme. One delegation expressed the view that only profitable activities should be maintained as income-producing activities. A number of delegations queried the objectives as regards procurement and transportation. Some delegations, while recognizing that the plan was a picture of the future, noted that the narrative did not describe the current situation. Others expressed the view that the narrative should be future-oriented and clearer objectives for future activities and targets should have been included.

6. Regarding subprogramme 24.5, delegations expressed their views on the need to improve the efficiency, quality and timeliness of conference services. Some delegations emphasized the need to improve the quality of translation and the timeliness of documentation and to enforce the regulations governing documentation, in particular the six-weeks' rule for the distribution of documentation. Reference was also made to the need to limit documentation and make optimum use of conference services. A number of delegations believed that increased reliance on contractual translation was not justified and that any expansion in its use could erode the expertise of the United Nations and the confidentiality of information. Other delegations stressed the importance of

providing conference services to meetings of regional and other bilateral groups and the need for effective enforcement on the length of documentation. Other delegations emphasized the need to respect cost constraints, to develop better cost information and to improve the global planning of conference services.

[6 bis One delegation proposed the addition of a new subprogramme, to be entitled "Internal oversight". Other delegations did not share that position.]

Conclusions and recommendations

7. The Committee recommended approval of programme 24 of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, with the following modifications:

(a) Paragraph 24.5: In the second sentence, replace the word "crisis" with the word "situation".

(b) Paragraph 24.6 (a): Replace the subparagraph with the following:

"To facilitate the work of the Committee on Contributions through the provision of technical services;".

(c) Paragraph 24.6 (c): Replace the word "permit" with the word "ensure".

(d) Paragraph 24.8 (a): Replace the words "functioning of an" with the words "functioning of a simplified, yet efficient and".

(e) Paragraph 24.10 (a): At the end of the subparagraph add the following:

"and to improve transparency in the presentation of all accounts of the United Nations to facilitate the deliberations and decision-making of intergovernmental bodies".

(f) Paragraph 24.10 (g): At the end of the subparagraph add the following:

"in accordance with and in full compliance with General Assembly resolutions and decisions".

(g) Paragraph 24.12:

(i) Delete the word "global" throughout the paragraph wherever it appears (24.12, and subparagraphs (a), (c), (d) and (h)) before the word "Secretariat".

(ii) In the first sentence, replace the words "respond dynamically to the needs of Member States" with "carry out its functions efficiently and effectively".

(h) Paragraph 24.12 (a): After the words "management system;" add the following:

"establishment of career development policy in the Secretariat with regard to all types of appointments and with due consideration to adequate balance between permanent and fixed-term appointments; to continue with the practice of secondment of qualified personnel by Member States to the United Nations Secretariat;".

(i) Paragraph 24.12 (c): At the end of the subparagraph, add ", and to continue to hold national competitive examinations as a useful tool to select the best qualified candidates;".

(j) Paragraph 24.12 (g): Replace the subparagraph with the following:

"To implement conditions of service approved by the General Assembly, and to take effective action on work/life issues in order to attract and retain appropriately qualified, high-performing staff;".

(k) Paragraph 24.12 (h):

(i) Between the words "skills" and "enabling", insert the words "including language skills".

(ii) After the words "changing organizational needs" add the words "to deal with emergency situations".

(l) Paragraph 24.12 (i): At the end of the subparagraph, add the words "subject to further consideration by and prior approval of the General Assembly".

(m) Paragraph 24.17: After the word "area" add the words "subject to prior approval of the General Assembly".

(n) Paragraph 24.18: After the words "engineering expertise" add the words "to upgrade these facilities periodically".

(o) Paragraph 24.20: Replace the text of the paragraph with the following:

"The objective in this area is to restructure the procurement and transportation function to provide the Organization with more responsive, expeditious and cost-effective procurement of goods and services for Headquarters, regional offices and field missions and, in this regard, to ensure competitive, fair and transparent process.".

(p) Paragraph 24.21 (b): Delete the subparagraph.

(q) Paragraph 24.21 (c): Replace the text of the subparagraph with the following:

"To develop and maintain a database comprising suppliers from all geographical regions of the world by introducing a simplified and transparent mode of registration as well as procedures for the deletion of outdated information;".

(r) Paragraph 24.21 (d): Replace the words "To seek" with "To diversify the database by seeking continually".

(s) Paragraph 24.21 (e): Replace the text of the subparagraph with the following:

"To develop a computer program to select registered suppliers from all geographical regions to ensure competitiveness, transparency and equity during procurement exercises;".

(t) Paragraph 24.21 (f): After subparagraph 24.21 (e), add the following new subparagraph:

"To improve further upon the methodology for uniform practices and procedures in evaluation of bids and awarding of contracts.".

(u) Paragraph 24.24 (a): At the end of the subparagraph, add the words "with rational allocation and capacity utilization of the existing conference resources".

(v) Paragraph 24.24 (b): At the end of the subparagraph, add the following:

"in particular through regular consultation with committees and bodies at Headquarters and other duty stations to assess their needs and through the development of a cost-accounting system".

(w) Paragraph 24.25:

(i) In the second sentence, add the word "routinely" before the word "developed".

(ii) Replace the words "monitored, and" with the words "provided for both Secretariat and external use (e.g. by intergovernmental bodies).".

(iii) Delete the word "and" after the word "monitored" and begin a new sentence with the words "Technical advice".

(x) Paragraph 24.28 (b): At the end of the subparagraph, add the words "six weeks in advance of all meetings".

(y) Paragraph 24.28 (c): After subparagraph 24.28 (b), add the following new subparagraph:

"To ensure enforcement of regulations concerning documentation.".

(z) [Add a new subprogramme 24.6, Internal oversight, currently programme 25, Internal oversight.]